Robert Hand – Interview

(Recorded by Garry Phillipson 7th September 1997)

Biographical Note:

Robert Hand has been a professional astrologer since 1972. He is well-known as a pioneer in two separate fields: He was one of the first to develop astrological software for astrologers (his organization, Astro-Graphics Services, metamorphosed into Astrolabe, Inc). As a researcher and retriever of ancient astrological methods, he was a founding member of Project Hindsight and now works with his own organization, ARHAT (Archive for the Retrieval of Historical Astrological Texts). His books include *Planets in Transit, Horoscope Symbols, Essays on Astrology,* and *Night and Day (Planetary Sect in Astrology)*.

Robert graduated with honours in history from Brandeis University and worked as a graduate in the History of Science at Princeton. He has recently returned to academic life as a postgraduate student of Medieval History at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

He has served as chairman of the National Council for Geocosmic Research (NCGR); is a member of the Association for Astrological Networking (AFAN), the International Society of Astrological Research (ISAR), the Astrological Lodge, the Astrological Association of Great Britain; and is a patron of the Faculty of Astrological Studies. He lectures at conferences, seminars, and workshops worldwide.

Birth Data: 19.30 (Eastern War Time), 5 December 1942, Plainfield, New Jersey, USA – taken from Planets in Transit

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Q: In the Publisher's Afterword to *Horoscope Symbols* in '81, it said "Robert Hand's next book, *Horoscope Synthesis*, will focus on the all-important task of integration and synthesis. It will be published in the near future." I've always wanted to know what happened to that book?

A: What happened was, my methodology started going through radical changes at that point. And it became impractical to write the book, because I would simply have had to repudiate it a couple of years later. And I don't think I'll ever write a book under that name – but I think I will probably wind up dealing with the issue pretty well. But now the issue will be dealt with in the context of those more proven aspects of traditional astrology. Because traditional astrology, actually – unlike modern astrology – has fairly rigorous techniques for doing synthesis. Not of the chart as a whole, because neither in traditional astrology nor in modern astrology should one ever try to read the chart as a whole.

What you read is the chart vis a vis some issue. And the traditional texts are quite detailed on how to do that. Even to the point where one can assign numerical ratings to various parameters. This is a little arbitrary – but not totally, it gives you some kind of rough relative idea of the strength of things.

Most importantly, I've found that the methods of traditional astrology in regard to chart synthesis are *teachable.* This is one of my favourite interview themes. One of the things which prevented *Horoscope Synthesis* from being written was when I realised how one does chart synthesis – *really* how one does chart synthesis: You look at the chart, and you look at the chart, get familiar with all the components of the chart, and all of a sudden, bang! They come together.

That's *not teachable.* It's an entirely intuitive process. An *entirely* intuitive process – that's the key point. Any chart synthesis is going to be, to some extent, intuitive – but there should be a little scaffolding for you to climb up, before you try to fly! Whereas the basic method of modern astrology, you're right down there on the ground – if not down in the pit – flying out. I'm not saying that people can't do it; I'm just saying that it's unteachable. People do it very well, or there wouldn't be any modern astrology. But it's a process that people learn by accident.

Q: With the Arhat/Hindsight projects, do you feel as though you're getting close to having the most important texts translated now?

A: Well, as you may know, I'm no longer with the Schmidts – they retain the name 'Project Hindsight', for the simple reason that they came up with it in the first place.

OK, we are missing the following tracts:

The rest of Ptolemy (and it's now been demonstrated by Robert Schmidt, beyond reasonable doubt, that the existing translations of Ptolemy are woefully inadequate; in Book 3 there was bombshell after bombshell when we started consulting the definitive edition of the Greek text, which nobody had used before). So we need Books 2 and 4 of Ptolemy.

We need the rest of Vettius Valens – Books 5 and 6 are coming out fairly shortly. But there are, I believe, nine or ten books – so there are several to go, at least three or four, and he is the most important of the ancient authors – including Ptolemy, by the way. He's more important than Ptolemy, because he was a practising astrologer and he gives examples. Also there is strong evidence that he succeeded in what he was trying to do, which was to recapture the authentic Hellenistic/Egyptian tradition. Now, 'the authentic Hellenistic/Egyptian tradition' doesn't mean that it's '*better than*'; but it's a tradition that would otherwise be lost – except in its later transformations.

Hephaestio of Thebes – Books 2 and 3, especially Book 3, which is entirely on electional and horary.

There are some other books which are highly desirable, but that would probably do it for the Greeks.

In the Latin, we need all of Bonatti. We have a fair amount, but not all of it. I plan to take that task on.

We need translations from either the Arabic originals or the Latin translations – preferably the Arabic originals where they exist – of Masha'allah, (or Messahalla as he was called in the Latin period).

In the Renaissance material we need new translations of Placidus. With all due respect to Cooper, his translation is unreadable. Accurate, but unreadable.

And Morinus. We need all of Morinus, especially (interestingly enough) the first ten books. Because the first ten books aren't on astrology at all. They are on a

total reconstruction of natural philosophy in order to support his astrology. One of the few astrologers to try to come up with a complete world system – and it wasn't noticed, of course, because he happened to drop this little egg right at the time that the entire scientific revolution was occurring. So it got bypassed, completely. But it's in intelligent alternative attempts to deal with this kind of thing that you find material that is most likely to revolutionise modern thought. He may have been bypassed simply because of poor timing, not because of lack of talent.

We need the astrological works of Kepler. Which are coming. We have Kenneth Negus – a retired German professor, who has been working on the *Tertius Interveniens* for some time, which is a very systematic analysis of astrological method by Kepler.

Then there are some other books which would be nice in the Latin tradition – more than nice, Johann Schoener's books on the Judgement of nativities, which as near as I can tell is the most comprehensive text on natal astrology. It's only on natal; no horary, no electional. Predictive, yes, but that's considered part of natal astrology.

However, are we going to uncover any major new bombshells? Based on my experience thus far with Vettius Valens, until we have all of Valens translated we can't say 'no'. Because there has not been a single book of Valens that hasn't dropped a bomb.

The other thing we need to do is recapture the early horary tradition, which is Hephaestio and early Arabs. But we're getting close to the point where we can write an introductory text book of Greek era astrology – and a very good introductory text book of Arabic and Latin astrology.

I don't think there are any major bombs regarding the medieval material. But I *do* think that we need to learn a lot more about *really* getting in touch with that material – because it's of outstanding virtue. It's the only astrology tradition that we now have access to, where there is complete method. Now I'm not saying that they wrote everything down – no astrologer's ever done that! – but you can actually learn the *core techniques* from text books. And while modern astrology is a distant descendant of Arabic and Latin astrology, there have been a number of conceptual shifts – primarily technical – which are quite deadly. Here's my favourite one:

Modern astrology, especially as exemplified by the Ebertin and Witte schools, but even regular mainstream astrology, has a tendency to regard a chart as a static set of geometrical relationships. The Arabs regarded the aspects, particularly, as a *sequence of events*, in the middle of which you are born. There are aspects that are separating in a certain order, aspects that apply in a certain order – and to thoroughly understand every planet in the chart, you must know what the last and next aspects are going to be – because the person is conceived of as being the epitome of a moment of flux. It's a much more beautiful image than 'Well, we have this ninety-degree angle here, and a hundred-and-twenty degree angle over here, what does this do…' Also, quite often, when you look at a chart this way, it causes you to completely re-interpret the chart:

Exhibit A: Andrew Cunanan, who was responsible for killing Versace in Miami a couple of months ago. Look at his chart and there is (by traditional standards) a not terrifically good Venus, sitting in a very close sextile to Jupiter. And you look at it, and say, 'Well, this is the closest aspect Venus has – therefore, what the hell is going on here? Venus isn't great, but it's sextile Jupiter… (There is one little thing; one is the ruler of the first, and the other is ruler of the eighth, which is significant.)

When you analyse the *sequence* of the aspects, however, it turns out that before Venus caught up with Jupiter, Saturn retrograded in and made a square. They mutually apply to each other. Now this changes things completely; and in fact, if you take the standard medieval characterological analysis, where you go by planets rather than signs, he turns out to be either a negative Venus or a negative Venus-Saturn type. If you read the descriptions of these types from the medieval authors, which are loosely based on Ptolemy, they call the shots to a T. They are just extraordinarily good. Whereas, had you looked at the static arrangement, you would have been forced to say, 'He is a rather positive Venus type' – quite different. They refer, in their own quaint way, to sexual perversion; 'taking pleasure in the worst and most lewd practices'. This is not referring to the fact that he was gay; gay is fairly mainstream. This is referring to the fact that, basically, he enjoyed killing his lovers – which is a little over the top!

Q: Christeen Skinner, who I interviewed a little while ago, mentioned the fact that we don't have three-dimensional software; saying architects have it, so that if they're designing a building they can see the building that they're working on. Maybe – taking up what you're talking about – we need software that shows us an expanse in time…

A: Yes, strictly speaking that would be four-dimensional. I'm sure she's referring to the fact that we don't really deal with latitude and declination, and their relationships to the mundane sphere. The tradition by and large does this – that is, it does somewhat. In the Renaissance it came to do this more and more, but the Greeks actually didn't ignore the issue. They have a rationale for *not* dealing with it. And that is, that the planetary position was not the body of the planet, but the degree in which it lived. The planets illuminated degrees. Now the latitude would affect the intensity of that illumination, but basically what degree was being illuminated? The word 'partile' in modern English, comes from the Latin 'partilis' which is a direct translation of the Greek word *moirikos* which means 'according to the degree'. And – this is the interesting point – it doesn't mean within sixty minutes (as moderns would think it means); it means they are in *the same degree* – or the equivalent degree of the sign, so if you had a trine from 13.59 to 14.01 that is not partile. If you had a trine from 13.01 to 13.59 that *is* partile, because they are in the fourteenth degree in both cases.

So the Greeks, rightly or wrongly, had a *quantum* view – literally – of the zodiac. The zodiac is made out of a hierarchy of quanta (the actual term is morion; that word means allotment, or lot, as in 'a lot of land' or 'a person's lot in life'. In fact, the word for degree – 'moira' is a derivation of that) and these degrees, these moria are exactly what John Addey accused them of being – little boxes. And the Greeks would have said, 'Yes! We know they're little boxes! This is the way they are supposed to be! Because the universe is not a continuum; it is a

series of discontinuous quantities!' Well, guess what folks! That's exactly what physics is telling us.

Now this is not to say that a thing cannot be in more than one morion at once, because as I say there is a hierarchy. Degrees get integrated into faces, get integrated into bounds, get integrated into the signs. But at each level, the integration causes a group of discontinuous boxes, which is why for example you don't have aspects out of sign in Greek astrology (there is a debate about that, but as far as I'm concerned it's settled) – because it's meaningless. The Arabs did have aspects out of sign sometimes, because they were coming from a different concept structure.

But basically, the planets could be regarded as illuminating discrete rooms or chambers. And they would also cast rays, of course, to other discrete rooms or chambers – and that's the aspects. But in this schema, there is no tremendous need to deal with the kind of three-dimensional spherical trig construct that became fashionable in the Renaissance and is very popular now. Now, does this mean we don't do this? No, it does not mean we don't do it. I have enough experience of what are properly called co-transits, which is planets rising and culminating simultaneously. The Greeks actually did do this, but they did it only for bodies that are outside of the zodiac. In the zodiac, the ecliptic was, itself, the 'transmitter of energy' (if you want to use a modern way of looking at it). But outside of the zodiac, they did co-risings, co-culminations and so forth.

So I definitely think what she was talking about is valid and a concern; but it may nevertheless not be as important as it seems at first. The Greeks may have been right. I used to think this was just schemative, but now I realise they were coming from a devoutly Pythagorean point of view, in which everything is made out of whole number. There's a level at which the Greek doesn't really believe in continua. And as I say, now it becomes clear that the appearance of a continua is simply the presence of very small quanta. Apparently there is at this point, so far as I know in physics, no evidence of continua at all. So we have to re-examine that Pythagorean point of view! We can't just assume that it was the result of primitive thinking.

This is the same kind of thing that causes, for example, 365.2422 days to get collapsed into 360. If the actual phenomena resonate 'kind of OK – a little sloppy' with some perfect numerical pattern, the perfect numerical pattern is the reality and the approximation of the physical universe is simply matter doing its best to live up to the ideal. This is a very Platonic point of view.

While, if we take the somewhat mystical perspective that within the material universe there are what are usually referred to as 'higher' – I prefer to say 'more interior' – realms, which become increasingly systematic; what we are looking at here is a resonance between the material manifestation and the next, slightly more ideal, realm – in which case, resonances between ideal numbers and actual, physical phenomena, are very important.

For example: The Sun-Venus cycle, which creates a lovely five-pointed star every eight years – it's not perfect; but it's *real close!* So what do we take? The approximate five-pointed star, or a perfect five-pointed star? And if we should say 'a perfect five-pointed star', then Venus isn't quite living up to its role! This

is a defensible position. It may be wrong, but it's defensible. And a lot of astrology is based on it. That's why you don't get this kind of 3-dimensional approach in traditional astrology until the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. By Montulmo, in roughly 1400 AD, you begin seeing the desire to take the appearance into account a little more completely than the degrees. Now, there are phenomena like this in child development. So we have to be wary that maybe the Greeks were more child-like. But I'm reluctant to say that too quickly, because they were very sharp! For example, you have probably seen a picture of Mommy and Daddy that a four-year-old will draw, where Mommy is wearing a perfect triangular skirt. What psychologists have discovered is that the child sees the physical parent, and reduces the physical parent to a series of idealised shapes. And that's what they draw. They don't draw what they see; they draw what they think they ought to be seeing. And that may be what the Greeks were doing too. But on the other hand, maybe the child has an insight that the adult lacks. We get so inundated with the proximity of the physical universe that we lose track of the ideal as another layer.

So that whole elaboration is my feeling on the 3-dimensional chart issue. But I definitely think we need that fourth dimension. We need to go backward and forward in time around the birth to get the entire dynamic context. This is something the Greeks didn't do either; this is an Arabic trip, or more precisely a middle-Eastern trip.

Q: In Buddhist philosophy there's the word 'papanca', which refers to the mind's ability to proliferate concepts indefinitely. That shows in sub-atomic physics, for example, where there appears to be no end to the sub-division of matter. Do you think that there is an ideal astrology, or is it again an area where one can proliferate ad infinitum?

A: You should have been around last night! Geoffrey Cornelius, and other people, and I were having a related discussion. First of all, I do not believe that there is an objectively real astrology. I also don't believe there is an objectively real physics. The real question is, 'Does our experience of nature in any way uniquely determine a functional versus a dysfunctional response?' I think the history of science has clearly demonstrated that the answer is 'yes', but it has not demonstrated that the determination is total; it has not demonstrated that consciousness does not have a role to play, in fact, post-Schroedinger, it rather strongly implies that consciousness has a potent role in this. I think that 'consciousness' – for lack of a better term – (I actually like the Greek word 'nous', because that eliminates more primitive – or more definite - notions of what consciousness is, but I'll say consciousness) – I think consciousness enters into a dialogue with the apparently external (it may be external, but I'm going to call it the apparently external) and creates, with that apparently external, a series of language systems. And these language systems, like the language you and I use with each other, begin to determine the experience of a phenomena. But it isn't quite the same as projecting, because the 'apparently external' has an equally powerful role in determining the nature of the language. What makes this different is, *there is no one correct language.* Just as you can say the same thing in French, German, English, Italian, Chinese, Japanese – more or less – you can say the same thing in different languages of this kind. These are what the Renaissance called 'natural languages'; the languages of nature. They would have thought they were wholly external. I would say, it arises out of this

dialectic between consciousness within and consciousness without. Or nous within and nous without.

So that, when we forcefully create, collectively, a construct, that construct becomes a part of the forming of our experience, and we get a feedback loop going. Now, can any construct be created? The answer is no, only some constructs can be created – maybe a large number, but it's finite. And these are determined, (a) by the structure of human consciousness, and (b) by the structure of nature – or 'the apparently external'.

So for example, you can have Hindu astrology and Western astrology doing very good jobs with mutually contradictory means – namely the zodiac. But at the same time, you and I can't sit down and create an astrology that will work whimsically, out of pure intentionality. What we will find is, when we enter into the dialectical relationship with the apparently external, some of our intended means will not work – because there is no resonance between the structure of the apparently other, and the structure of the apparent self. That's actually a deep one; the apparent other and the apparent self. 'External' is not really a proper word; 'apparent other' is the proper way of putting it.

I actually described this quite overtly in the essay I wrote many years ago in 'Essays' on the precession of the equinoxes – the equinox through Pisces – where I talked about how the initial projection of the imagery onto the stars then feeds back and causes history to happen a certain way. Now from a purely modern point of view, this is absolute garbage and it doesn't make any sense at all. But it does if you think of human nous being embedded in a field of nous. And the interactions between different levels of nous cause structures to evolve. Actually, I used a pretty good example yesterday. Regardless of who Diana Spencer was (or Diana Windsor I guess, her married name) an entity has been created, and that entity is more than her actual, historical, self. Yesterday in the funeral her brother asked people not to do this; I was rather struck by that; 'remember her as a human being' – I was very moved by that. But it ain't gonna work! His hope is doomed, because the transformation has already happened. Diana is well on her way to an apotheosis. If there were a comet tomorrow, people would say, 'She's rising to heaven' – like Julius Caesar. I'm not being sarcastic about this, and I don't want people to take offence at the analogy, but it happened to Elvis Presley. You start looking, and you can see this – his home was called 'Graceland'? Wow! – And as I mentioned yesterday in my talk, we had the goddess of the Moon in the Temple of the Sun having a hymn to Jupiter played for her yesterday at the funeral.

It's clear that the power of what happened with Diana's death is due to the fact that there is some kind of – archetypal structure (if you like) – in both personal and transpersonal consciousness, resonating to this. That is gaining life from this, and I would not be wholly shocked if, within twenty years, there are miracles performed. Certainly there will be by Mother Theresa – and the chances of her being canonised are extremely high. But I wouldn't be surprised if the same thing, on a more pop level, happened to Diana. Unless, of course, as happened with Kennedy, dirt begins coming out – so that, now, Kennedy has been more or less reduced to human status. Still admired, but reduced to human status.

But the power of that service yesterday – somebody was saying that nothing like that has ever happened before, well actually it *did* once. I don't know how many people remember Caroline the Princess of Wales, in the early 19th century – who died very young – late teens or early twenties. I would say, from reading the literature, it was the same kind of enormous outpouring – but they didn't have television. They didn't have a BBC announcer saying, 'The entire nation will now have one minute of silence' (and the whole nation shut up at once!) Mass communication caused it to have much more impact than Caroline's death had. So what I'm saying here is that there may very well be, now, an entity in consciousness that is the result of all this energy poured in Diana's direction – whether it *is* Diana or not, I leave for other people to decide. But *effectively* it is. So this is an apotheosis. Whether it holds is another question, but it's certainly moving in that direction.

Q: A lot of people I've spoken to have said that they've found themselves to be much more emotionally stirred than they imagined they would be by the whole event.

A: Well, compliments to the chef, but that was one hell of a service! It had the all the timing and elegance of a perfectly done play or opera. And this is not criticism; this is what ritual is *supposed* to do! As I said in my talk yesterday, I can't imagine another nation that could have done that anywhere near as well. Because this country is steeped in ritual, and basically the stops were pulled out. I don't want this to sound in any way like a trivialisation. I *was* moved; I was definitely moved. I have a great admiration and respect for that kind of thing, because, for that hour, the entire psyche of Britain was *fused* into one. Incredible. I mean, witches are supposed to be able to raise cones of power – well, the cone of power over Britain yesterday was phenomenal! But the point is, I don't think the universe is a dead object, in which we are curious epiphenomena of the laws of physics and chemistry. I think that life creates life, on all kinds of planes and levels; and that's what is happening.

I don't know whether you are aware of it – most people don't know the full statement at the beginning of the Emerald Tablet. It's usually cited as 'As above, so below'. The full statement goes:

'As it is above, so it is below;
As it is below, so it is above;
In order to accomplish the miracle of the one thing'.

And what that tells us is, we not only get created; we *create*. But it's not what psychologists would say – projections; *this stuff is really there.* In any meaningful definition of existence, that stuff is real. It's only if you narrow your definition of existence down to that which can be weighed and measured by laboratory instruments that it ceases being there. But by those criteria we cease being there also.

I want to tell you a funny thing. Challenges went out from various movements of psychology – one of these said, 'What would I have to do to prove to you that there is no such thing as a soul?' My response was, 'Prove to me that I do not exist'. I can completely prove to my satisfaction that you don't exist; yet you can't prove to me that I don't exist!

Q: Are you a magician?

A: Do you mean in the technical sense of the word? No. Do I believe that ceremonial magic is a valid set of techniques? The answer is yes. But I do not practise. Partly it's a lack of time – it hasn't grabbed me enough to pull me in that direction. I also realised – I've read Dion Fortune many times, but this was the first time I'd read the book called 'Psychic Self-Defence' – and I realised that unless I find a really good teacher I'd better not do it. I could join one of the magical orders, of course. But I've thought of that a couple of times, and the spirit just is not going in that direction. I'm intrinsically more of a mystic than a magician. But I believe that the mystical and occult world views have considerable validity. In fact, there are certain kinds of things that I think can only be explained by the Neo-Platonic, Kabbalistic views of a multi-layered world. Astrology, for example!

The way I like to describe the physical planets: In Kabbala you have the four realms – Atziluth, which is the highest realm of creation (there's the uncreated of course; but of creation, Atziluth is the highest realm. That's the so-called emanational realm). Then you have Briah, which is usually translated as 'the archetypal realm', but actually means 'the realm of carving (or 'scraping away')'. Atziluth means 'next to', by the way. Then you have 'Yetzirah', which is translated as 'formation' – which is a formation done by moulding, and shaping a somewhat fluid entity. And then there is Assiah, which is action (in Sanskrit, karma – assiah and karma mean the same thing).

As you descend through the worlds, you become increasingly determined, less free, and more multiplied. This is directly descended from Platonism, of course. I think there are probably some Kabbalists who would be offended by that, but Kabbala is essentially a Judaic Neo-Platonism, with lots of Hermetic stuff too. Or it's coming from the same roots, which is also possible.

Now, human beings - according to Kabbala – are the only entities who can travel in the four worlds – up and down. Although for the most part we stay in the bottom two. Yetzirah is basically what you are when you look inside; and Assiah is what you are when you look outside. Well the physical planets are 'Assiatic' (to coin a word); the astrological planets are 'Yetziratic'. *They don't exist out there.* But they are the *cause* of 'out there'. So the physical planets don't cause anything. The Yetziratic planets cause the physical planets; and they also are the source of the same movements of the soul, which is Yetziratic. So what astrology is really doing, is not examining a physical phenomenon at all, but rather a phenomenon on the soul level – Yetzirah, formation. Which prefigures, and underlays, the physical universe.

I would say that, in the proper sense of the word *cause*, the planets are the effect. But the reason why we use them is because they are so reliable. And why are they so reliable? Because they are *utterly* Assiatic; they are totally determined. The physical planets are totally determined by the movements in these inner worlds, or underlying worlds, or whatever you want to call them. And we can use them to describe the less-determined movements in the upper, or inner (or whatever!) worlds. This is what we are doing. We are essentially using the planets to tell us, 'what soul-time is it?' They really are a clock. But

the soul sets the clock; the clock does not determine the soul. So the physical planets are the final result; they have no freedom… actually that's not totally true, they have a tiny bit. That's called chaos; there's a certain amount of chaotic factor in the solar system – but very low, otherwise we wouldn't be here.

So I think this multiple-world approach – Kabbala, Neo-Platonism and so forth – really goes a long way to explaining, at least in a qualitative way, a lot of the phenomena we went into. I think astrology may in fact be *proof* of these realms, because I don't see any way you can explain the Mars Effect of Gauquelin due to mechanical interaction; I don't see any way that can be done. I gave a lecture several years ago where I concluded by saying, 'The Gauquelins are right – and the scientific world-view isn't!' This is being perceived dimly, which is why they're getting so ferociously resistant.

Now I don't mean that every aspect of science is wrong; of course not. But the scientific world-view has very little to do with science. Insofar as science is a set of models, and theories designed to interpret and deal with phenomena, I have no quarrel with it at all. But when they generalise from that to a metaphysical position – usually very primitively – and say, 'This is the only way it can be' – that's when I think they go off the rails. I think *that's* what astrology proves they have done wrong. But it says nothing about quantum mechanics, nuclear physics, laws of motion or biology or any of that. What astrology says is the metaphysical viewpoint, that some scientists – only some – have generated out of their perception of physics is incorrect.

Q: Lilly says something to the effect of, 'The more holy thou art, the better you will be at doing astrology'

A: Yes! I'll buy that. There actually is some material that we've dredged out of the late Greek philosophy that came to us directly; the most explicit statement is in one of the passages in the *Corpus Hermeticum* – though you'll find it elsewhere too – and that is that we are all subject to various kinds of fate – and I don't mean different destinies, I mean that there are different components of destiny. The simplest one is called, *Heimarmene* – which means, 'that which has already been allotted'; you don't get to choose, it's already happening. I'll give you a simple illustration of that – we are human. That automatically incurs some limitations. The way the Greeks would have put it is, we are in the physical universe – and that causes certain limitations automatically. They would go on to say, 'this causes us to be dominated by the movement of the planets' – but we don't have to make that assumption. I think they're right, but the point is that one does not have to make that assumption. However, there's a second component of fate which is a fate where your life is determined by your ignorance. And when that is distinguished from *Heimarmene* it's called 'necessity'. Necessity and *Heimarmene* are often considered the same, but there are places where necessity is the result of ignorance, not of that which has already been allotted.

In this construct, the role of the astrologer is to dispel ignorance. Because, insofar as you dispel ignorance, you increase the freedom of the individual. However, there's a third component called *Pronoia*, which is usually translated as 'providence' – a literally correct, but meaningfully hideous translation. It would

be better translated – though it sounds like gibberish – as 'nous-ing forward; nous-ing forth'. Consciousness is like, ka-pow! Out!

And what – I believe - it is, is the transformation of one's relationship with the *Heimarmene*, when one is reasonably conscious (which is far more conscious than we normally are). And what you discover is, that your freedom is to be perfectly what you are. You have no freedom to be otherwise. That's OK, actually. It may not be always pleasant, but you could not possibly achieve happiness any other way. So it's just like Calvin said, you are free – to do God's work. Period.

The difference, however, is that our normal notion of destiny is an external compulsion that works against our will. This is an internal compulsion, that *is* our will. What *Agnoia* causes, is that people are at war with themselves; ignorance causes people to be at war with themselves. So a true spiritual astrology would be an astrology that assists people in ceasing to be at war with themselves.

Now this leads us right to humanistic astrology; but the source is Greek! As I said last night, Plotinus's view of an astrologer was virtually identical to Rudhyar's. There's nothing new under the Sun! The only thing that some of the others would have added, is they would used as mitigating devices ritual magic. Iamblichus in particular had this kind of viewpoint. Hindus do the same thing – they use various kinds of ritual magic to mitigate planetary influence. But I would submit that you don't mitigate the planetary influences; you alter your consciousness about them. So you go from *Heimarmene* to *Pronoia*. Or from *Agnoia* to *Gnosis*. And at that point, there ceases to be a conflict – even though there may very well be pain (because, as Buddhists correctly point out, being in this universe causes a certain amount of pain intrinsically). Even though there may be pain, there can also be happiness and contentment – because your will is being perfectly fulfilled, by becoming what you are.

So Lilly put it in Christian terms; to be 'holy' is to be 'conscious'; and I don't just mean 'awake', either; it's a little more elaborate than that. The single greatest component of how I would describe 'being highly conscious' is that you have an accurate perspective on the relative significances of things. Because – to take a simple-minded example – people who are all hung up on earning money, may exalt the earning of money to a status it's not entitled to. And consequently their lives may be made miserable by this. Now not all people who go out to earn money are made miserable. But, if you look them, they are having a good time playing the game. My favourite comment along those lines came from a financial astrologer; he said, 'The money isn't important – it's just a means of keeping score!' This is quite a different attitude than the one which makes money almost a god.

I believe that people who play life as a high-level game - I don't mean trivially, but who play life as the spontaneous, exuberant outpouring of energy along certain lines (whether they do it consciously or not) are going to be happy people. So what these people who say that 'money is merely a way of keeping score' have done, is they have restored the perspective. What's really fun is the game; the money is just a means of keeping the score!

I think all people who are happy in their lives do this at some level. I've stated many times that, if you define play or a game as 'an activity pursued for its own sake', rather than for the pursuit of something higher in a hierarchy, this is usually – in our culture – considered to be trivial and unimportant. What's important is work. And we define work as an activity which is pursued for the sake of something else – maybe higher, maybe not.

But at some point, unless you are going to have infinite regress, the answer to a question 'why is this happening' has to be: *a game.* Which means that, at the top of all of this, is a colossal game – in the highest sense of the word. This is overtly stated in Hinduism – *Lila.* And playing games, therefore, is an emulation of the divine (in the highest sense of the word; I don't mean 'playing games' in the sense of tricking people and that kind of thing. I mean being a manifestation of divine energy, purely for the sake of being a manifestation of divine energy. One acts, not to get Brownie points with God, but one acts just simply as a pure manifestation of divine energy, playing. This is a very high activity. If you do this consciously, and you know what you are doing, it's even higher. But I think it's so good, that even if you are somewhat unconscious about it, you're still going to have a good time.

I'm not saying that we don't need discipline, we don't need to work, at all – because all good games require discipline. My favourite example is an athlete; he has to train. It's interesting to note that – I don't know how true it is in this country – but in the States, athletics is such a big business that the game quality of it is being destroyed – and people are getting cynical about it. You don't have baseball heroes anymore; these guys are getting paid a couple of million dollars a year – that's not heroic! Especially when they're raving jerks, and demonstrably so. Basketball stars ditto. Again, there is that distortion of perspective.

Q: Do you think astrology can take people a good part of the way towards this realisation?

A: Yes! I think this may be the twentieth century's outstanding contribution to the history of astrology; the use of astrology as a developmental tool. Because I think any decent counselling astrologer has two issues to deal with: One is nuts-and-bolts questions – 'what's so, and how does it work?' That's always been the case. But the other is, to get people to accept themselves. Because the lack of self-acceptance is the primary cause of ignorance. As it used to be put in the old EST training, 'there is always the conflict between who you are afraid you are, who you think you ought to be, and who you really are'. Insofar as you are labouring in that conflict between who you are afraid you are and who you think you ought to be, you're ignorant about who you are; and you pervert your life.

Charts, astrology and the readings we give, by taking a little bit of the load off the person, and putting a little bit of it onto the cosmos, allows them to look at themselves and say, 'This is what I am; it's OK'. That is a first step; it's not the last step, but it is the first step. The reason why it's not the last step is, your perception of what you are is not necessarily accurate; but it's a start! The point is, you *stop resisting*. This, I think, is something that astrology does do already. But there's a next step, which is described by Plotinus - in irritatingly vague detail – where he says (I'm paraphrasing): 'When the object of contemplation,

and the contemplator, are one, and there is no longer any boundary between them, then the contemplation is perfect.' That's a very free paraphrase, I hasten to add. Now what he says around this passage is 'Action derived from a perfect contemplation, is perfect'.

Now, what does that mean in terms of the chart? Well, even with a humanistic approach to astrology we tend to think of Saturn as being an external attribute that either signifies or does something. But it's external. The contemplated Saturn would be you and it being one totally; and everything you do follows out of a perfect sense of the continuity of you and it. The astrologer, instead of prescribing courses of action that people follow – to take evasive manoeuvres during a rotten transit, for example – the astrologer would actually help that person become the 'rotten transit' – and it wouldn't be rotten any more. It would simply be 'one doing what one is'.

Now, this sounds very exalted, and how can you ever experience this sort of thing? It's actually very simple. People experience the perfect contemplation all the time. My favourite example is walking – it's that trivial. You *don't* think about walking. You *are* walking, when you walk. I don't mean 'you are walking'; you *are* walking - when you walk. There is no sense that the walking is an external activity – unless you're tired, of course. When you learn any new skill, there's a period where there's a gap between you and the skill – like if you ride a bicycle, when you first of all learn it, it's very foreign and alien – then all of a sudden you become the riding of the bicycle. That's contemplation; that's it.

Now, if astrologers can develop the art to the point where we can assist people in achieving that with the symbolic map of the psyche we call the chart, then astrology will make an enormous leap forward in efficacy. And that's when it will really become a tool to make people move on the spiritual path. Quite frankly, we don't know how to do this. So we have to go with a slightly inferior form, of getting people to a state of self-acceptance and maybe mapping out some practical strategies for dealing with gooey situations. And maybe, eventually, we'll learn how to do this other thing. Unfortunately, Plotinus gives you no hints whatsoever as to how to bring this about. Iamblichus, who is the more magically-oriented, indirect disciple of Plotinus, said that one way you can do this is through magical ritual. Had his school of philosophy survived intact, we would have a school of Tantric Platonism. That's what he was – a Tantric Platonist. So we would have a Platonism that is like Tibetan Buddhism. Since we don't have it, we might as well use Tibetan Buddhism – or ceremonial magic, or whatever.

But I think astrology *does* have a role to play in that, but we have a learning curve here. Bit like a cliff, actually.

Q: What was your route into astrology?

A: My father was using it to forecast the stock market. And I was interested. But it wasn't that he taught me astrology, exactly – he'd been studying only a little while himself. He created an environment which I could learn in. I think it was like the junkie's first dose of heroin. My first reaction was, 'Holy Cow! The universe isn't the way they taught me it was in school, it's totally different!' Basically, my fascination with astrology is as a form of natural philosophy. I respect all the things you can do with it, but fundamentally I'm into it for what it

teaches me about nature, cosmos and psyche. That was how I got into it – it was a little different! I was seventeen. I'm fifty-four now, and I've been studying astrology for thirty-seven years – as of this month, in fact.

Q: Are there going to be books of your own writings, as opposed to translations, coming out soon?

A: Well, there's already a little booklet called *Night and Day*, I'm planning to expand that into a full-length book. I'm also writing technical theses on various aspects of traditional astrology. However, my biggest, most ambitious plan at the moment is to take Schoener's two books, the *Opusculum Astrologicum* and the Three Books on the Judgement of Nativities and to embed them in very large commentaries. The purpose being that they can serve as introductions to the way traditional natal astrology was done.

Then – and I don't know where I'm going to find time to do all of this – then, a text book is needed describing how *we* would want to do it. How it was done, and how we would want to do it, are two different things. I say over and over again, I am not an antiquarian. I have no interest at all in having modern astrology be like fifteenth century astrology. Ancient and medieval astrology had a much better technical apparatus; but the interpretative apparatus of modern astrology, the symbolic apparatus, I think is superior. You look at the characterological descriptions in the medieval text-books, and you say, 'Interesting – but incredibly simple-minded'. And most importantly, you have no sense of how the inner workings of the psyche are structured. We are very psychological. I don't think that is a mistake! But various people have come to me for readings. I have a good friend, Joseph Crane, who I have been working with, and he's going through a similar transformation; people have said to us, 'You do psychological astrology – with medieval techniques' – and that's exactly right. I don't see a problem with that.

Q: Do you do many consultations?

A: Yeah, I do a few a month. I can't do a lot, because of my other activities, but I want the practical experience of being with real clients.

Q: How long does it take you to prepare?

A: For a typical consultation, unless something really exotic is being asked for, an hour and a half, two hours – something like that. And basically all that is, is me looking at the chart and getting all the details straight. I don't try to formulate, in advance, a lot of preconceptions. The other day, for example, a woman wanted me to do the chart of her seventeen-year-old son. I found a Moon-Venus-Jupiter T-square on the angles. Well, there are two possible manifestations of this. One of them is, a guy whose self-indulgence gets him into a lot of trouble; the other one is, a really powerful, artistic kind of thing. Well it turned out to be the latter. He had Mars in the 12th square Uranus, and his mother was afraid he was too undisciplined, and that his interest in music was simply some sort of teenage fantasy (even though she acknowledged that he's awfully good).

She wanted to send him to a military school. And I thought 'Mars in the 12th house square Uranus' – this kid would be a disaster in a military school! Absolute disaster! Boy, was he grateful! He'd been trying to talk his mother out of this. The chart just said, overwhelmingly, disaster! But if he's encouraged in his art, his music – real possibilities. What's even more interesting – maybe within three or four years, because Saturn is coming toward the meridian by transit.

While I thought it might have indicated a kind of self-indulgent slothfulness, I didn't form that conclusion until I began a dialogue with his mother. A lot of astrologers like to amaze and astound the client by calling all sorts of shots without getting any input whatsoever. That's very good entertainment, and it's certainly useful to get people over the hump of 'Does this stuff really work' (I usually don't have a problem with that anyway). But fundamentally, I think the chart must be done in the context of a dialogue between the client and the astrologer, so that the polymorphous symbolism of astrology can be pinned down.

Quite frankly, given the proper dose of *Agnoia*, that chart I mentioned above could simply be the chart of a kid who is totally self-indulgent, pleasure-loving, no drive, no motivation, and probably everything would be going wrong because of the T-square. But it could equally well have been, as I said, highly artistic. There were other things which elevated it up a bit, including Neptune; it wasn't just Venus. Venus by itself does not create an artist; but Venus and Neptune do. He plays rock music. His mother's comment was, 'His music is beautiful'. Now that's not a comment you can make about a lot of rock!

Q: From all your studies of historical texts - what would you say a practising astrologer can't afford to overlook?

A: Well, the first thing I would say is, relax! If you are doing good service for your clients, don't think you've got to drop everything and learn anew. However, insofar as you feel that your techniques are unsatisfactory, take this up:

I think one of the simplest things from Greek astrology, which almost everyone who encounters finds that they have to use, is the day and night issue. We tend to start on typology with the twelve-fold division, but actually the first typology is a two-fold division: the day and night birth. And they are different. It's not so much that you can make a general statement about the different psychology of the two, but the way of reading a chart is different. Every planet is a little different in a day chart and a night chart. Mars and Saturn are the most extreme examples. Mars in a day chart is much more malefic than it is in a night chart. Saturn in a night chart is much more malefic than it is in a day chart.

I could even give you a rationale (this is actually a rationale that was pointed out by one of the Hindsight people, Chuck Bucek by name). He proposed that the diurnal planets were of the nature of the limited – that is, they limit; they delimit. The nocturnal planets are of the nature of the undelimited. Now the classic example of this is, the Moon symbolises unconditional – there's the word, *unconditional* – maternal love. 'I love you because you are my baby, not because you are disciplined and hard-working….' Now, when the Moon operates in a diurnal context, it is *conditioned*: 'I will love you if….' That's a condition; a

limit. OK, Saturn is the principle of limit. In a nocturnal chart, the principle of limit becomes unlimited. Now one of the characteristics of the unlimited is, whereas the limited speaks in terms of positive adjectives, the unlimited speaks in terms of comparative adjectives. When a teacher says to a child, 'You must work harder', the question is then 'Then what?' But Saturn in a nocturnal chart *does not give you a 'then what?'* Wherever you are, you must work harder – without end. And so the principle of limit itself becomes unlimited - which is pathological!

In a diurnal chart, it says, 'You must work harder in order to do this. And when you've got it, you've worked hard enough.' See the limit? So limit itself must be limited. The other example I like to use is Jupiter, which is also a diurnal planet. Jupiter, in the daytime, indicates integration and growth. But it leads to a particular end, or object. At night, it's just bigger and bigger and bigger… It has no end. Similarly, the Moon and Venus – which are nocturnal – in a nocturnal context, they represent that unconditioned love, which is their chief glory. But in a diurnal context there are conditions, there are rules. So Venus-Saturn, for example, in a daytime chart, would indicate a highly conditioned experience of, and giving of, love: 'You can love me *if you…*divorce your wife, do this, do this, and do this'; or, 'You can love me in return for a hundred dollars'. See the conditions again. That's a whole new kind of understanding, and it's very powerful. Conventional modern astrologers that I describe this to find it instantly graspable. And it really works. I have a nocturnal Saturn, so I know about that thing. Out of sect, peregrine and retrograde! So I've had a hell of a time learning to say 'No' to Saturn. Saturn says 'No' – but saying 'No' *to* Saturn is another matter entirely.

There are probably other issues too, but the other ones are still, basically, works in progress.

Q: Can you home in on one or two factors in your chart which explain why you approach astrology as you do?

A: I've approached astrology in so many ways – that's what actually shows up! And that's due to the fact that I have a nocturnal Jupiter. It also makes me gain weight. As a matter of fact, one of the things I've come to realise about my body is that, if I do not periodically really curtail my eating, my body will gain weight indefinitely. There is no set point. It's really depressing! But that's probably it, actually – it's the dominance of Jupiter in my chart. It really is dominant: it's in the first house, it's the almuten of the ascendant, and it's the almuten of the entire chart according to the Ibn Ezra method. And it's exalted. As well as being the ruler of the midheaven, and ruler of my Sun-sign. So it's all over the place. Basically, it means…. my sister once said, 'If you could do anything in the world, what would you do?' And I said, 'I'd want to know everything!' That's it. That's Jupiter.

So I suppose that at one level, my interest in traditional astrology is due to the fact that it's yet another thing to study. But at another level, I am by basic temperament an historian. And I believe that continuity of tradition (good Cancer rising stuff here!) is extremely important as it gives a personal sense of place and location in the scheme of things. There are times when that becomes oppressive and limiting, and you need to overthrow it – no argument. But it

should never be overthrown completely – it should simply be loosened up, so that light can come in.

I've always had an interest in the history of astrology, right from the very beginning. But what I didn't have was access to the information – and I probably would have gone this way a long time ago if I had have had the access. In 1980 you couldn't even get a copy of Lilly, unless you had lots of bucks and a good rare book dealer. Olivia Barclay sent around her Xeroxes, and got it around in that form, which was certainly a major step forward. But what did we have? We had the Ashmand translation of Ptolemy – which is translated as if Ptolemy were a Placidean, with no commentary whatsoever. Well, I'll give you one little hideous example. The Ashmand translation continually refers to planets in different conditions. Now, what does that say to you? It sounds like, they're affected by different factors – but no, 'condition' means 'sect'. And he doesn't know that, he doesn't tell you that. So you don't know if 'planets in different conditions' means 'planets in different sects'.

We had the Robbins translation of Ptolemy, which is simply incompetent. One thing we established is that the Robbins translation is *full* of mistakes. My favourite one is that he translates a certain Greek word as 'marriage', when it can't possibly mean marriage – it means sexual union, because you don't have marriages between brothers and sisters, I'm sorry – unless you're a Pharaoh of Egypt. And 'marriages' between aunts and nephews, things like that; he keeps translating the word as 'marriage'. Well that's relatively easy, but there are much subtler foul-ups all over the place. It is simply not a competent job.

Who else did we have? Well, in the 70's we got Julius Firmicus Maternus translated from Latin – useable, but not a great translation. Occasionally she will fill in the gaps with her own speculations as to what the Latin should have said, and it's not a good idea. Who else did we have at that point? Well, if you were academically oriented you would have found some scholarly texts. But accessible to a general astrologer – Ptolemy is about it. And Renaissance astrology – Lilly, if you could get an old copy. That's what prevented me from getting into history earlier.

I have to say that I am very clear about a distinction that has to be made here. I am an historically-oriented astrologer, who is capable of applying certain historical techniques to his clientele. However, my fundamental interest is in getting the techniques up to the point where they can be checked out. Consequently, I have in my head at any given time five or six mutually exclusive techniques. If I were primarily a practising counselling astrologer, this would drive me nuts! As a matter of fact some parts of it *are* driving me nuts. And I fully respect people who pick and choose among these to work up a practical subset that will enable them to give good service to their clients. So I am not, in that sense, a practical astrologer. But I would submit, I'm needed! Because if people like me aren't around, the practising astrologers won't have the opportunity to pick and choose from anything.

At some point I may settle down to a coherent system also – in fact, I think I'm moving in that direction. But I don't know if I'll ever practise astrology intensely enough to really sort it out. I'm going to have to leave that in the hands of other people: I'll say, 'OK people, here is the groaning board covered with food; look at

all this food here, you can eat anything you want, choose!’ My function is to put the food on the table, it is yours to take what you want to eat. I would have been here a long time ago doing this if it had been possible.

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